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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DAKAR 001291

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/14/2016

TAGS: SNAR PGOV PREL PU

SUBJECT: GUINEA BISSAU: DRUG FIGHT TAKES BIG STEP BACKWARD

Classified By: DCM Robert P. Jackson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) In a surprising move, the GOGB took a big step backward in the fight against drug trafficking with the firing of the police chief responsible for two major seizures. The Interior Minister appears to be positioning himself to control more of the traffic. Meanwhile, consumption is starting to be seen in the local population. With this development, bilateral cooperation on drugs will be complicated. Now more than ever, the Department should continue to move forward with funding for the UNODC position in Bissau. END SUMMARY.

COMMISSION INVESTIGATES MISSING COCAINE

¶2. (U) An interministerial commission was established to examine the circumstances surrounding the cocaine seizure on September 24, 2006 which netted 674 kg. of cocaine, the largest ever in the country's history. Shortly after the seizure, the two Latin American smugglers were released from jail and the drugs disappeared out of Finance Ministry coffers. Several people involved in the case testified including former Finance Minister Victor Mandinga.

¶3. (C) The commission released a final report on June 9 which listed three courses of action. The first was to turn over to the Attorney General the full transcript of the proceedings so he could open criminal cases. On June 12, the Attorney General verified to PolOff June 12 that he would open criminal investigations but did not say against whom. The second action was a national program to combat drugs to be created by the Minister of Justice in coordination with the others on the commission. Third was the immediate de-commissioning of Judicial Police Director-General Orland da Silva and Central Director of Investigation and Prevention of the Judicial Police Alexandre Forbes. No explanation was given for the dismissals; no charges were brought against the two men; and no one has yet been appointed to lead the Judicial Police.

DA SILVA SPEAKS OUT

¶4. (C) PolOff and visiting DEA Agents Robert & Sam Houston from Paris and Sam Gaye from Lagos interviewed da Silva who confirmed suspicions that the firing was an effort to destroy the Judicial Police as the only successful anti-drug agency in the country. Both cocaine seizures were conducted by da Silva and his men. Da Silva alleged Interior Minister Baciro Dabo was behind the move. He saw Dabo and others from the Interior Ministry headed toward Gabu the morning of June 10 and his sources confirmed that the men went to meet two planes which had arrived from Venezuela carrying cocaine.

¶5. (C) Da Silva and his men were planning an interdiction of the two planes which were scheduled to arrive at the military section of the Bissau national airport the morning of June 10. Members of the military viewed him surveilling the site and altered the landing to Gabu. He noted that traffickers are not as brazen as they used to be and are using more out of the way locations such as Gabu, about 100 miles east of Bissau.

¶6. (C) Da Silva did not know who would replace him as Judicial Police chief but guessed it would be a puppet for Dabo. He said he was not a suspect in the disappearance of the drugs; on the contrary, the only explanation he received for his ouster was not keeping a key to the coffers in the Ministry of Finance where drugs were stored. He learned of his firing by hearing it on the radio.

¶7. (C) When asked if President Joao Bernardo & Nino Vieira was behind his firing, da Silva said he did not think so. Dabo and Vieira have had a very close relationship in the past and Dabo has served previously as the President's security advisor. But da Silva said the relationship is

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strained and Dabo only won his post by buying it from Party of Social Renewal (PRS) Vice President Sori Djalo. At the time, Djalo was the proxy of PRS president Kumba Yala, but they have since parted ways.

CONSUMPTION RISING

¶8. (C) Da Silva and UNOGBIS Deputy Daniel Ruiz both raised concerns that drug usage, most prominently crack cocaine, is starting to take root in Guinea-Bissau. They noted this was significant because just recently, drug usage was completely unknown in the country. Recognizing the problem, Finance Minister Iussuf Sanha has asked donors for support in stopping drug use. Ruiz described a scene at a high school across the street from his house where he witnessed drug pushers, who he said were Nigerian, engaged in a shoot-out with police.

COMMENT

¶9. (C) Da Silva's firing appears to be a significant set-back for counter narcotics efforts in the country. The firing has not been explained by the GOGB but it seems clear that no explanation will convince observers that the move was justified. DEA agents were in-country with the goal of furthering the working relationship with da Silva as police chief and only learned of his firing on the morning of their arrival in Bissau. Now, any cooperation with DEA will be slowed until a new chief is appointed and assessed for reliability.

¶10. (C) The Embassy has sent a diplomatic note to Prime Minister Martinho N'Dafa Cabi, who presided over the commission which fired da Silva, requesting clarification and reiterating the importance of fighting narcotics, money laundering and corruption. Embassy strongly urges rerouting USD 150,000 in INL/ICITAP pipeline funding to support the UNDP project of posting a UNODC counter-narcotics official in Bissau. Post is also looking into the possibility of establishing a mini-Dublin group among Dakar-based diplomats to strengthen our message to the GOGB. END COMMENT.

¶11. (U) Visit Embassy Dakar's SIPRNet site at

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/af/dakar>.

JACOBS